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Identical letters dated 14 June 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Colombia, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

We have the honour to write to you on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Colombia, Comoros, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Latvia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Monaco, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovenia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Yemen.

We express our deepest concern at the ongoing grave humanitarian situation in Syria, the continued violations of the cessation of hostilities, the lack of protection of civilians and in particular the devastating conditions inside Syria's besieged and hard-to-reach areas. The Secretary-General reiterated on 14 January 2016 that "the use of starvation as a weapon of war is a war crime". We stress the urgent need for immediate, full, unimpeded and sustained access for the delivery of humanitarian aid to all areas, consistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions and for parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

We welcome the 17 May statement issued by the International Syria Support Group calling for immediate, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to all people in need throughout Syria, as defined by the United Nations and called for in Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). In this regard, we reiterate that the

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delivery of aid through humanitarian aid convoys to besieged areas is the most effective way to allow sustainable humanitarian support. We urge the Security Council to uphold its responsibilities, including by focusing on the protection of civilians, including ending the Syrian regime's starvation and siege tactics; and to further support the Group's efforts to that end. The Group called for the World Food Programme (WFP) to immediately carry out a programme for air bridges and air drops if humanitarian access were denied to any of the United Nations designated besieged areas by 1 June. In this regard, we welcome the presentation on 9 June 2016 by WFP of an operational plan for air operations to besieged areas in Syria.

According to the United Nations, there are currently 4.6 million people living in hard-to-reach areas in Syria. In these areas, the situation is critical. Men, women and children are regularly denied humanitarian aid and needlessly suffer from malnourishment and disease.

The United Nations estimates that 592,700 people are besieged in 19 locations across Syria. The reality confronting Syria's besieged communities is abominable. Basic food staples are denied to children, women and men. Babies are denied milk and left to starve. The sick are denied medical supplies and left to die. Nowhere is the humanitarian situation more dire than in Syria's besieged areas. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria has called these conditions "medieval".

The devastating conditions inside Syria's besieged and hard-to-reach areas are as preventable as they are heinous. The United Nations has stated that it stands ready to deliver assistance to all civilians in need, including in hard-to-reach and besieged areas. The Security Council has called repeatedly for immediate, full, unimpeded and sustained access to all areas. Yet, since the start of the Syrian conflict, the Syrian regime in particular has deliberately besieged cities as a tactic of war. According to the Secretary-General, the Syrian regime is responsible for 78 per cent of the sieges, while Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is responsible for nearly 19 per cent and other non-State armed actors are responsible for 3 per cent. Sieges directed against civilians are violations of international humanitarian law and must be lifted with immediate effect.

We strongly condemn the denial of humanitarian access to those in need, and call on all parties to allow and facilitate immediate, full, unimpeded and sustained access of humanitarian relief to all areas, including besieged communities, as well as hard-to-reach areas, where the needs of the civilian population continue to grow. This includes the necessary guarantees for the safety and security of the humanitarian actors, including medical missions.

We express our strong support for the conclusions reached by the International Syria Support Group, during its ministerial meeting of 17 May 2016, which, if implemented in full, have the capacity to improve the humanitarian situation for hundreds of thousands in Syria and enhance efforts to achieve a political solution. We support the Group's call for WFP to air drop aid to all areas in need beginning 1 June, should access to Syria's besieged areas continue to be denied.

It is imperative that immediate, full, unimpeded and sustained assistance be provided and that it be strictly on the basis of need, as determined by the United Nations, without any adverse distinction and in particular to besieged areas. We also reaffirm the importance of preserving humanitarian space for principled humanitarian action. We urge the Security Council and all Member States to take

appropriate measures to alleviate humanitarian suffering and to ensure that humanitarian assistance is provided, including medical assistance, to all in need in Syria. No one in Syria should have to live in fear of starvation.

In parallel, the Security Council must intensify its focus on the effective implementation of the cessation of hostilities in Syria. It is incomprehensible to our Governments that people in Syria continue to be subjected to unconscionable violence of a historic scale, including attacks against medical facilities, schools, market places and internally displaced person camps, while no sufficient efforts have been undertaken to protect civilians or ensure accountability. As the Syrian authorities are unwilling to investigate and prosecute international crimes, the international community must take the appropriate measures to promote accountability for these crimes. Violations of international humanitarian law committed by all parties to the conflict must stop and perpetrators should be held to account.

Furthermore, we reiterate that the humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate in the absence of a political solution. We hence urge all parties to work towards a genuine political transition, which would include the establishment of a broad, inclusive, non-sectarian transitional governing body with full executive powers in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), including the full implementation of the Geneva communiqué. We fully support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria in this regard.

The resolve of the International Syria Support Group creates new opportunities to end starvation across Syria. It is imperative that we not let those opportunities go to waste. On behalf of our respective Governments, we reiterate our appeal to the Security Council to support the Group's efforts, most particularly in ensuring immediate, full, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access in Syria.

For too long, the Syrian people have been subjected to unconscionable violence and starvation. We, the undersigned, have repeatedly condemned the crisis in Syria and the ongoing use of violence. Condemnations are not enough. Syria is the crisis of our time. How we, as members of the United Nations, choose to respond to the Syrian crisis, will define our legacy for future generations.

We would be grateful if you would have the present letter issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 72 (c), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) María Emma **Mejía Vélez**
Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Alya Ahmed Saif **Al-Thani**
Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations

(*Signed*) **Oh** Joon
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Abdallah Y. **Al-Mouallimi**
Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Fodé **Seck**
Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Güven **Begeç**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**, CBE
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Samantha **Power**
Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations